How Can Social Software Enhance Training Measures within Software Implementations in the Financial Sector?

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Abstract

This paper summarizes a doctoral thesis project which argues to adopt End-User Training (EUT) as an acceptance enhancing factor of a software deployment. The main research object of this project is to explore how social software can be used in combination with, or as a substitute to traditional and well-established training methods for EUT within a software implementation. The target group will be within the financial sector. The aim is thus to build a bridge between research on the acceptance of (organizational) software implementation, End-User Training and learning research from the perspective of information science. Even if the target group of this project is limited to the financial sector it should be possible to apply the presented design dimensions to other sectors.

Keywords: social software; End-User Training; EUT; software training; software acceptance; software deployment

1 Introduction

A software implementation has several factors which could influence its success. Although the technical deployment plays an important role, ultimate

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success is determed by non-technical aspects (Kohnke & Bungard, 2005: 41). One of these aspects is user acceptance which can be significally enhanced through suitable trainings (Kohnke, 2015: 420–445). In addition to many other fields of application, also the training sector has been promised major changes with web 2.0 and social software. Learning and working should be even more online and mobile.

The term "learning 2.0" was created in accordance with the concept scheme "web 2.0" (Stoller-Schai, 2011). Both terms strive to highlight the possibilities for participation and or the interactivity of the users or consumers in certain areas. However, learning 2.0 is "neither an already established canon of topics and methods, nor does it mean that established and proven topics and methods are be completely replaced. Instead of a revolutionary change, it is rather an evolutionary development, an enhancement of the tried and tested with new aspects" (ibid.: 10). And these enhancements are "web-based applications and services that are used for social interactions within groups that support human communication and cooperation, thus sharing the structure and maintenance of social networks, as well as publication and distribution of information within social networks" (Manouchehri, 2010: 1) – in short, "social software".

Did learning-revolutionary development happen already in companies? To what extent do companies already use social software in the training context and more specifically, in the End-User Training of software? And what kind of social software is actually suitable for enhancing or even replacing established End-User Training methods? Manouchehri (2010), Back (2012) and others have already shown some potential benefits and applications of social software in companies. Social software offers

> "new forms of direct, personal communication, new possibilities in the creation and use of collective intelligence and community performance, an effective way of dedicated provision, preparation and exploitation of already existing knowledge, visualization of communication, interaction and knowledge as well as new ways in the search for information, common resources or even knowledge sources" (Manoucheri, 2010: 68).

How can these benefit potentials be used specifically to enhance End-User Training? The answer to this question is the object of investigation of this interdisciplinary doctoral thesis project.

2 Research questions

The overall aim of the doctoral thesis project is to highlight the benefits that using social software within End-User Trainings of software can grant for (financial) companies. The research questions which frame this project are as follows:

RQ1: What kind of social software is suitable for EUT?
- (a) Which social software applications are applicable to the leaning/ training context?
- (b) How can they be combined with traditional EUT methods?
- (c) How can they replace traditional EUT methods?

RQ2: How is social software already used in the training context in (financial) companies?

RQ3: What are the benefits for companies to use social software within End-User Trainings?

3 Approach and methodology

An iterative approach is used in the empirical study. In a first step, based on the results of the literature research and its derived desiderata an inventory of the as-is condition is made. For this purpose, employees from the financial sector and educational experts (those working in financial institutions as well as external experts) are interviewed. In order to obtain a comprehensive picture, a combination of qualitative and quantitative examination instruments should be used.

To collect as much data as possible the employee's information should be gathered with an online questionnaire. At the same time, qualitative, guided expert interviews should be performed with two central target groups: company-based trainers, who are active in a financial enterprise and external experts. In order to benefit from the findings of the previous interviews and to illuminate certain new aspects from several perspectives, the interview guide will be consistently checked for possible extensions after each interview. The findings of this first iteration will be matched and combined with the desiderata of the literature research. The outcome of this will be a training matrix.

The levels of the matrix contain the social software applications which have been identified as appropriate for the training context, but also traditional EUT methods, and recommendations about suitable combinations and influence categories (for example organizational framework, training goal and/or content). This is followed by a feedback session with the training experts working in the financial sector. The content of this iteration step is a result presentation of the employee survey and its determined discrepancies with the results of the expert interviews. A concept test of the training matrix should be performed within the feedback sessions as well which might result in further improvements of the training matrix.

In at least two financial companies an actual implementation of the training matrix is to be carried out. Appropriate elements suitable for the selected software introduction are selected from the training matrix and implemented and trained. Afterwards there should be an employee survey done to measure the success. If possible, usage figures and hotline reports should also be included in the success measurement. The last iteration step, which completes the validity test of the training matrix, is a further feedback session with the training experts. This could either be a group discussion or even a symposium.

4 Status quo and next steps

This doctoral thesis project has just started in autumn 2016. While literature research and deriving of desiderata is done now, the next planned step is the start of the empirical study in spring 2017.

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